



February 8, 2016

Honorable Selectboard;

Please accept this as an abridged accounting of recent activities of the Town Administrator on your behalf and related to various projects and initiatives.

Ledges Golf Course; as you are aware we began an investigation stemming from a discovery by Treasurer Deborah Baldini as to missing bank deposits from the golf course in late November. The Treasurer discovered there was a deposit gap as far back as July and the missing deposits were from October and November.

Administration was notified immediately, as was Town Accountant William Sutton and a preliminary internal review was launched. Administration engaged an outside auditor, Scanlon Associates with experience in fraud investigation. The firm's the initial audit established there was eleven deposits missing over a seven week period. On January 4, 2016 a detailed on-site review of financial practices was commenced by Scanlon at the golf course.

The missing deposits totaled \$6,308. However, the cash controls put in place by the Treasurer in July helped to identify the missing deposits quickly. We have identified other areas of cash control weakness and will institute additional measures for the beginning of next season. Along with changes of policy we will change the organizational and management structure for the 2016 golf season at Ledges. There will be a closer daily relationship between municipal offices and a direct management link to Town Hall going forward.

As there is an on-going criminal investigation in respect to the events we will not be able to make any further comments as to employees or former employees involved. To protect the process (and the employees), administration will limit comments regarding specific changes to cash control procedures at this time, as they are essential to the investigation and/or the security of future operations.

We expect the Ledges will open as soon as weather conditions will allow and consistent with other area courses. We are proceeding to add staff to accommodate the new management model. We are putting in place for this season and beyond a focus on golf first to start the season. This important issue has drained a great deal of valuable time as of late and will continue to demand attention from a number of managers and staff external to the Ledges. We are confident it will be a wise investment time and effort which will pay dividends in the future.

We will be working on the suggestions made by both the Selectboard and the Golf Commission to create a food service which caters to golfers. High quality, quick and tasty items which can be enjoyed whether you are relaxing in the Clubhouse or back out on the course to enjoy the Ledges.

I met with the Golf Commission on Monday evening to discuss the changes and they seemed receptive and supportive.

This week I have also had conversations with officials from PGA, the alarm company, pest control, checked on the facility twice and had the ATA speak with the propane company to make sure we have heat. I will be happy to hand the keys over when it is appropriate to do so.

Hampshire County Council of Government; The Hampshire County Selectboard Association will meet in the South Hadley Selectboard Meeting Room to discuss Town Meeting and how to make it work for communities on March 17. There are several long time Moderators from other communities who have been asked to participate as well as some Town Clerks. I have been asked and have accepted to take part and speak on my experiences with Open and Representative Town Meeting. These invitations are generated by HCCOG.

This symposium is open to Selectpersons who belong or may consider joining the association. The agenda is being crafted by Bernie Kubiak, longtime Deerfield TA and member of the Amherst Town Meeting. He can be contacted through the Hampshire County Council of Government.

Senior Center; The water infiltration source and resulting erosion of footings at the center has been identified by our facilities contractor and we have begun the repairs to eliminate (or at least reduce) the seepage. It should not come as a shock this was due to a make shift “clean out” for drains which has begun to demonstrate its age.



The drain clean-out will be cleaned out (got to love that idea), repaired and the shifting sand and gravel will be returned to its proper resting place. It is easy to see at the base of the lolly-column, how quickly rust is eating away at the flange support of the column due to the high water table. The erosion problem is in the northeast section of the center (away from Dayton and to the left rear when facing the building).

On Tuesday I had the pleasure of meeting with Gail Spafford a member of the COA and the Senior Center Building Committee. We first discussed the process of hiring a new COA Director, I explained how we have a prescribed hiring process for all positions. It includes a “vetting committee” who will review all qualified applicants and decide on the most suitable candidates to be invited for an interview. I

described how the vetting committee would be made up of the Human Resource Director, an employee “third-party”, in this case Library Director Joe Rodio and a member of the COA (Eileen Burke). When they make a decision they make a written recommendation to me and then I decided whether to appoint, re-interview or reject, it would have to be something fairly serious for me to “reject” at that point. It was discussed this is our standard process for hiring now.

Gail was reassured when she heard that we would show “preference” to anyone who also had project experience, and by that I mean someone who had been part of a significant building project. I believe it to be a universal belief that type of experience would benefit the South Hadley Senior Center building efforts.

We also discussed the process for having a new facility. They have already started a “needs assessment”, starting with visiting other facilities. I agreed this is an important starting point, I also encouraged them to start cultivating a relationship with Capital Planning. I explained it will be integral to the success of their efforts to have the CPC understand their needs and the inadequacies of the present center. Gail said she was going to ask the COA to consider hosting the CPC at a future meeting and allow them to tour the place.

Budget FY 17; The only substantial change this week to the budget was an adjustment made to “Public Buildings” adding \$54,000 to a new line item “Trash Removal”. In previous years the dumpsters at all the public buildings (including schools) were funded out of the Solid Waste/Landfill Trust. This made a great deal of sense when the tipping fees were bringing in revenue or at least it was easier to overlook.

As we all know the situation has changed, the landfill is closed. Cost for sludge which was sent from the WWTP to the landfill increased the WWTP budget by about \$280,000, increasing pressure on that enterprise fund by way of example. This is somewhat similar in that respect.

This change is to properly place the cost on to the taxpayer, not the ratepayer. While landfill costs to the ratepayer remain over a million dollars with no more subsidies from outside concerns, it make sense to move the charge onto taxation. We will continue to promote recycling in the public buildings, even better, work to reduce paper consumption on the front end, and look for ways to lower the cost of trash overall. We will make any trash removal charge related to the schools or to enterprise accounts reconciled at year end through a schedule 19 or recovered cost transaction.

Just as reminder the “draft” budget is on the website for everyone’s review it is linked to the Town Meeting, Appropriations and Selectboard pages, so it should be relatively easy to find, if not just call me and I will try to help. If you have any questions or would like more information about line items, let me know via email and I will do my best.

I will also be further adjusting the Ledges budget to facilitate the changes being implemented between that department and the Recreation Department. I am hoping to make the budget more flexible for hiring and also streamlined to maximize returns on the taxpayer budget investment.

The Appropriations Committee has set their initial budget meeting for February 18, 2016 in Room 1 (6:30) at Town Hall. <http://www.southhadley.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1977>

Woodlawn Plaza; I had the opportunity to meet with Don Mace from KeyPoint Partners recently. They are now the leasing agents appointed by the bankruptcy court to review and develop all lease

arrangements for the property. Mr. Mace was obviously experienced in the leasing field and had a well-rounded understanding of the marketplace and also is in contact with site selectors in this region or businesses looking to come into this market. One of his primary tasks at this point is to secure lease agreements for the two small restaurants affected by the filing. These owner-operators are nervous about the future and I think everyone agrees we do not want to hurt the small businesses, because a big business had finance issues.

The fact that the property is on unstable financial ground continues to make drawing “real” interest quite difficult. The traffic counts are not overly appealing to some of the national or even the regional grocers, but he does see some possibilities with the sub-regional grocers and mixed retail groups. He stated he was meeting with some of the long term tenants and is actually meeting with a possible tenant later today about some space. As with the Gaylord Street industrial property the bankruptcy process continues to be a frustrating hindrance to have some positive economic movement in SoHa.

Hazard Mitigation Plan; A public hearing was conducted at the Planning Board meeting on the plan on Wednesday February 10. Jamie Caplan from PVPC and Sharon Hart EMD South Hadley were the primary presenters, but there was great support shown by Jim Reidy (DPW), Jeff Cyr (District 1), Andy Orr (SHELD), Mark Aiken (District 2), Janice Stone (ConsCom), Charlene Baiardi (Building) and of course Richard Harris (Planning) all part of the Hazard Mitigation Team, all attended.

This plan is a requirement for the Town of South Hadley or any affiliates to apply for disaster relief in the case of an occurrence. The plan will be part of a public hearing at the Selectboard on March 8. This is a big undertaking which all participants should be very proud of their engagement and the evolving product.

Thank you for your support and encouragement over the last few months and weeks. It is greatly appreciated given the circumstances.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan

South Hadley, Town Administrator